ChatGPT

06.01.26

Group 8

Cand.Merc.OSL

1. Semester

Title page

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1. Introduction

The rapid development and widespread incorporation of generative artificial intelligence, particularly ChatGPT, has significantly impacted how students approach studying (Baig and Yadegaridehkordi, 2024). ChatGPT is increasingly used as a tool for learning, idea generation, and problem-solving, while simultaneously raising questions about academic integrity, responsibility, and acceptable use. But how has ChatGPT become such an important tool in students' lives? And what meanings do students attach to ChatGPT? And how is this meaning generated?

This project examines how university students understand and articulate their use of ChatGPT in their study life, and how these understandings are shaped through social interaction and shared discourses. Anchored in a social constructionist paradigm, the study focuses on how meanings surrounding ChatGPT are constructed, negotiated, and stabilized through language rather than treated as fixed individual attitudes. Through four focus group interviews, the project explores how students collectively make sense of ChatGPT as a study tool and how shared perceptions of legitimacy, usefulness, and boundaries emerge within group settings. This has led the group to the following research question: *How do students understand and articulate the use of ChatGPT in their studies, and how do social discourses influence their perceptions?*

2. Literature review and theoretical background

Following Torraco (2005), an integrative literature review was chosen because it enables the integration of both empirical and theoretical insights in an emerging research field like students' use of ChatGPT. According to the article, this style of review is suitable for undertheorized topics. Given that this research field is new, the integrative review allows for a flexible yet systematic approach to help identify key concepts that will inform the grounded theory analysis.

When choosing which literature to include in this review, there were certain criteria that had to be met, and the seven articles and one book all fulfilled these criteria, as seen in figure 2. Relevancy to the topic is a criteria, hence the needs for key words when scouring for literature. Because the research field is emerging and ChatGPT was made publicly available in 2022, the research since then has been very active. Even though this is true, finding literature that fits within the keywords while also from a similar context has been a difficult task, but the extensive reviewing led the group to these eight pieces of literature. These are all relevant in their own matter, and will help navigating the topic of ChatGPT in studies. Below in figure 1, a reasoning for the relevancy of the individual articles/books will be included. Since the amount of literature is vast in this new emerging topic, a lot of literature was disregarded even if it fulfilled the keywords criteria, simply because the context was completely different, in regards to either culture, nationality or educational level (Torraco, 2005).

Titel:	**Content:**	**Relevancy:**
1. ChatGPT in higher	**This study investigates which**	**This study investigates how the students**

education - A Student's perspective	**factors affect the students' opinions and adoption of ChatGPT in higher education, but also how the students experience, usage and relates to ChatGPT through their practical usage.**	**understand, opinion, experience, and acceptance of ChatGPT, which is aligned with this project's purpose.**
2. The influence of ChatGPT on student engagement: A systematic review and future research agenda	**This study's purpose is to collect and analyze existing empirical studies to understand how ChatGPT affects students' behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement.**	**This article is considered relevant, as it provides an overview of the research field, and what we already know about ChatGPT and student engagement, but also how it affects the students' learning, motivation, and study practices, which is aligned with this project's purpose.**
3. From concerns to benefits: A comprehensive study of ChatGPT of usage in education	**This study investigates how students use ChatGPT in their study work and what influences their adoption, experience, and behavior. The purpose is to examine both the positive aspects and concerns that the use of ChatGPT entails.**	**This article is considered relevant, as it investigates how the students experience, understand, and verbalize ChatGPT, but also points out the benefits and concerns the students experience, which is aligned with this project's purpose.**

4. ChatGPT Awareness, acceptance, and adoption in higher education: The role of trust as a cornerstone	**This study is about what drives the university students to become aware of, acceptance and use of ChatGPT in their studies, and in particular what kind of trust there is among the students, there is among ChatGPT:**	**This article is considered relevant, as it investigates what perceptions the students have on ChatGPT, and on how they use ChatGPT, which is aligned with this project's purpose.**
5. Analysis of college students' attitudes towards the use of ChatGPT in their academic verifications of information and responsible use.	**This study is investigating university students' attitudes to use ChatGPT in their study practices, and which factors influence their attitudes.**	**This article is considered relevant, as it explores how students perceive and evaluate ChatGPT in connection with their study, which is aligned with this project's investigation.**
6. Students' appraisals post-ChatGPT use: Students' narrative after using ChatGPT for writing	**This study is about students who have recently learned English and how ChatGPT contributes to their student life as new English speakers.**	**This article is considered relevant, because it helps understand how ChatGPT can contribute to studies in which the student does not excel, and how this helps create an understanding of ChatGPT among students exploring uncharted territory, which is aligned with this project's investigation.**
7.	**This study is about**	**This article is**

Thinking Outside the Black Box: Exploring the Impact of ChatGPT on AAU Students' Academic Integrity	**academic integrity. When is it helpful and when is it not helpful. Some students become reliant on ChatGPT while others are too critical of it.**	**considered relevant, because it explores how and when students deem it ethically correct to use ChatGPT, and why the opinions among students has become this way, which is aligned with this project's investigation.**
8. "ChatGPT can make mistakes. Check important info." Epistemic beliefs and metacognitive accuracy in students' integration of ChatGPT content into academic writing	**This study is about how much students incorporate AI-generated text without fact-checking it first. ChatGPT can help students include more correct factual content, but it does not by itself prevent students from including errors.**	**This article is considered relevant, as it helps understand why students cannot blindly trust ChatGPT, and how this shapes the shared understanding of how/when to utilize ChatGPT, which is aligned with this project's investigation.**

Figure 1: Literature review
Source: Own production

To ensure transparency in the project, figure 2 explains the sequential order in which the literature review has been constructed. It shows the different criteria the literature had to fulfill, and how the project reached the 7 articles and 1 book that will complete the literature review.

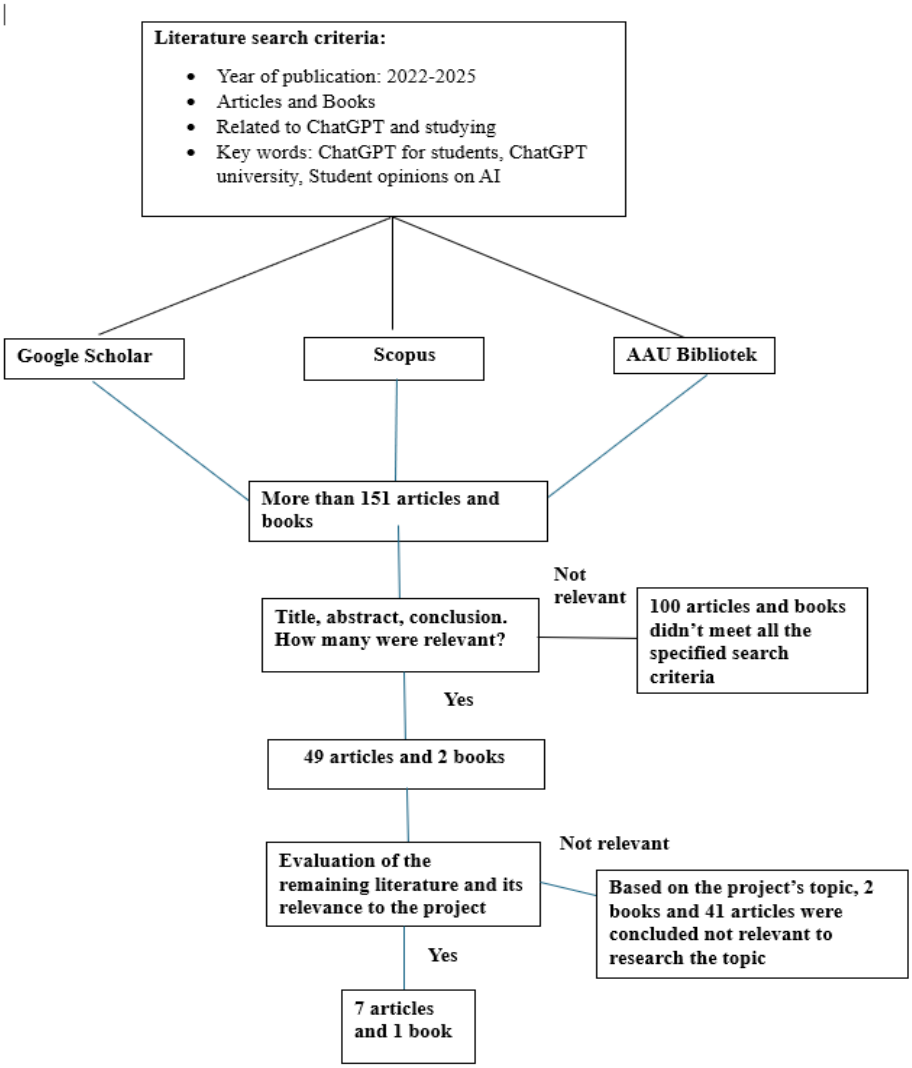

Literature search criteria:
Year of publication: 2022-2025
Articles and Books
Related to ChatGPT and studying
Key words: ChatGPT for students, ChatGPT university, Student opinions on AI
Google Scholar
Scopus
AAU Bibliotek
More than 151 articles and books
Title, abstract, conclusion. How many were relevant?
Not relevant
100 articles and books didn't meet all the specified search criteria
Yes
49 articles and 2 books
Evaluation of the remaining literature and its relevance to the project
Not relevant
Based on the project's topic, 2 books and 41 articles were concluded not relevant to research the topic
Yes
7 articles and 1 book

Figure 2: Overview of search criterias
Source: Own production

3. Philosophy of science

The scientific paradigm applied in this project is social constructionism, which is based on Gergen's description of the concept (Henderikus J. Stam, 2001). Within social constructionism, ontology, which is how reality is created, is understood as a social construction. Reality is a relational construction formed through the interaction between individuals, grounded in social engagement and language use. The paradigm fits the project because the purpose of the project is to

understand how student narratives construct a shared truth, describing ChatGPT as a study tool. It also provides the paper with a momentary understanding of a constantly changing concept, which can help other researchers understand the common opinions about ChatGPT at this specific time. Withness thinking is a concept used within this field, in which individuals are viewed as constant factors that both influence and are influenced by their surroundings. This leads to a deeper and more dynamic understanding of concepts in the moment, rather than viewing these concepts as isolated (John Shotter, 2005).

Furthermore, the concepts of externalization and institutionalization, presented by Berger and Luckmann, will be used to explore the paradigm, as they help explain how reality is created and understood. Externalization refers to the process through which an individual's thoughts, feelings, and actions manifest as objective and visible elements in the world. It relates to how an individual's reality becomes accessible to others, which occurs through language, clothing, rituals, and more (Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, 2012).

Institutionalization, on the other hand, occurs when an individual within a group begins to adopt and accept the actions of others. This is the process through which actions become habits, and habits become patterns, ultimately transforming into part of the group's traditions or rules. This can occur with behaviors, expressions, music, and so forth. Institutionalization can be seen as an iterative process, if one does not break out of established frameworks, one becomes fixed and stops learning new things. Reality begins to be taken for granted when these frameworks are not challenged; however, when new knowledge is introduced and incorporated into the group, the cycle restarts (Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, 2012).

For this reason, the concept of intersubjectivism is often used alongside the ontology of social constructionism, as it explains the understanding of

reality as a collection of fleeting and momentary experiences that occur in the moment as individuals interact with one another. Even though “common sense” exists, these moments are experienced as unique and ephemeral. Thus, an individual’s experience of reality is grounded in the environment in which they are situated. Culture, language, and group affiliations all influence how an individual’s understanding of the world is formed, and the ontology within this paradigm is therefore regarded as intersubjectivist (Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, 2012).

As mentioned earlier, social constructionism, which shapes our understanding of knowledge, is the scientific paradigm chosen in this project. Epistemology concerns the nature of knowledge and examines how knowledge is created, validated, and communicated. Within a social constructionist perspective, knowledge is not viewed as an objective reflection of an independent reality, but as something produced through social interactions. Knowledge is understood as a product of language, cultural norms, and the ways in which people collectively interpret and negotiate meaning. Truth is therefore not seen as absolute, but as dependent on the context in which it is produced (Galbin, 2014, p. 84).

This epistemological orientation also implies that we as researchers cannot assume a neutral position outside the phenomenon being studied. The researcher is part of the social practices and discourses that generate knowledge, and therefore actively contributes to the construction of what is being investigated. Knowledge is therefore not something that is discovered, but something that is cocreated in the interaction between the researcher, the involved informants, and the social context.

4. Method

This project uses a qualitative approach, as the purpose is to investigate how the students understand and discuss their use of ChatGPT, and especially how their social environment influences their perceptions of ChatGPT. The qualitative approach is suitable for this project, since the project aims to explore the students' experiences, meaning-making, and their social practices of ChatGPT. This approach aligns with the study's social constructionist paradigm, which aims to view knowledge and reality when it is constructed through language and interactions (Emma Bell, 2019, p. 462).

4.1 Focus group interviews

The primary data collection in this project is based on focus group interviews, where four groups of students were interviewed. Focus group interviews are relevant for this project, to study and explore social understandings, as the informants interact and negotiate with each other and develop a collective meaning. This social setting allows both individual viewpoints, but also how they develop a social understanding and statements in group dynamics (Emma Bell, 2019, p. 464).

Each group consisted of 3-6 student members from the 5th semester, recruited through campus postings. The participants were relatively homogeneous in age and represented a mix of both male and female students all of Danish nationality. Although they shared the same academic level and a common motivation for participating, given that it was a requirement, they came with different personal experiences as university students. Because the students were similar in some ways but still had different experiences, their groups offered a good foundation for

understanding the topic from their own perspectives. As students in the final year of their bachelor degree, they had enough academic experience to speak in detail about the themes explored in the study. It was important to create a comfortable and open conversational environment with the groups, to ensure their statements were as honest as possible (Emma Bell, 2019, p. 465). To collect the most relevant data possible, a semi-structured interview has been used, which has the advantage of ensuring a common thread throughout the interview, while also allowing for follow-up questioning, if new and interesting points or topics arise during the interview (Christina Haandbæk Schmidt, 2020, p. 36). Semi-structured interviews also have the advantage of starting with broad questions, which makes the informants more comfortable in the conversation, which strengthens the potential for honest questions. Afterwards, when the conversation has established a comfortable environment, the interview can flow to more targeted questions. The semi-structured interviews were used with themes stretching from how the students use ChatGPT in their everyday life to how their social environment influences their opinions and discourses on ChatGPT.

4.2 Gioia

The analysis will be based on the Gioia methodology, as it provides a systematical approach, which ensures developing themes and concepts from the collected data (Dennis A. Gioia, Kevin G. Corley and Aimee L. Hamilton, 2012). This method separates between 3 steps, which is shown in ‘Producing a theoretical construct’ made by Corley and Gioia (2004) (Emma Bell, 2019, p. 527). The first step involves identifying first-order concepts, which preserve informants’ own words, experiences, and descriptions, ensuring that the initial coding remains close to the data. The second step focuses on second-order themes, where these initial codes are interpreted and categorized into broader themes that capture underlying patterns. Finally, the third step leads to the development of

aggregate dimensions, which represent higher-level theoretical constructs derived from the themes and provide a coherent analytical structure for understanding the phenomenon under investigation. Based on this methodological framework, the Gioia approach was applied systematically in the study to guide the empirical analysis (Emma Bell, 2019, pp. 526–528).

This analysis is conducted in three important steps to secure transparency and accuracy. Firstly, first-order concepts were conducted, during which the students' statements were coded using their own words. This step maintains closeness to informants' perspectives and avoids premature interpretation. Second, the analysis identified second-order themes, where similar statements were grouped together into broader categories that reveal patterns across the data. Finally, these themes were combined into aggregated dimensions, enabling the integration of the empirical categories into higher-level concepts that reflect the broader social discourse and the students' understandings of ChatGPT.

4.3 Grounded theory

To further analyze the data in this project, the usage of grounded theory contributes as a structured analytical framework, in which the collected data will be coded into different concepts (Emma Bell, 2019, p. 522). Afterwards, the project will analyze the relationship between the categories, to see which affect each other, and how so. The social processes in which these categories emerge will also be analyzed, to gain a better understanding of why this is the shared truth reached by the group. Language regarding the topic is important both for the paradigm in which the project is anchored, but also for the grounded theory to develop naturally. This also means that the data analyzed will be closely related to the methodological choices that are used in this project, as grounded theory is an iterative process, where there's constant comparisons between the data and the concept which will be explored in

the project (Emma Bell, 2019, pp. 521–524). These comparisons will be between the different focus group interviews, to see if a shared truth will emerge or if the opinions surrounding ChatGPT differ significantly. This means that the researchers must constantly comb through the interviews and compare them to the theory that develops throughout the grounded theory exploration. For this project, grounded theory has been chosen because ChatGPT is relatively new and therefore undertheorized, meaning that there aren't many theoretical frameworks around ChatGPT yet, hence the usage of grounded theory to help explore this new concept.

4.4 Methodological considerations

Sarah J. Tracy presents an inclusive and flexible model for evaluating qualitative research across different paradigms. She argues that although qualitative methods are diverse and context dependent, researchers still benefit from a shared set of overarching criteria that describe what high quality qualitative work aims to achieve. Her model responds to the challenge that existing standards are often fragmented, confusing, or tied to specific epistemological traditions. By proposing eight “Big-Tent” criteria, Tracy offers a common language that is accessible to students, useful to practitioners, and persuasive to external audiences who may be unfamiliar with qualitative inquiry (Tracy, 2010).

Therefore, it has been prioritized to ensure high quality through three of these criterias, which is worthy topic, ethics and meaningful coherence. ChatGPT is a worthy topic, given its relevancy and impact especially on students and their understanding of the phenomenon. The contemporary controversy between when using ChatGPT is accepted and when it is considered cheating sparks research. The project explores informants’ understanding of ChatGPT and how a unified truth is formed through language (Tracy, 2010, pp. 840–841).

Furthermore ethics has been important to ensure high quality. Procedural ethics includes mandates such as avoid deception, negotiate informed consent, and ensure privacy and confidentiality. To ensure this, all informants have been marked as either “Speaker ” or “Informant” in the transcription of our interviews. This does not only attend to ethics, but also leads to more credible data. Gonzales argues that researchers should always be respectful and allow informants to assist in defining the rules of the research. Through communication with the informants they have had the opportunity to assist in the rules of the research. Before the interviews began there was a conversation of “our” rules, and if they had any additions. Furthermore after the research concluded, each focus group received a copy in order for them to further have a say on the rules and if they wanted any of the quotes, taken from their interviews, removed (Tracy, 2010, pp. 846–847).

Finally, meaningful coherence has been in focus given the achievement of the stated purpose, accomplishment of what we espoused to be about, used methods that partnered well with theories and our paradigm, and interconnected our literature review with our research foci, methods and finding in our data (Tracy, 2010, p. 848).

Tracy concludes that qualitative quality is both craft and art. These criteria are meant as guides, not strict rules, allowing room for creativity, improvisation, and the complexities of real world research (Tracy, 2010, p. 838).

5. Analysis

5.1 Introduction

Applying Grounded Theory methods to the interview data uncovered a common theme. While some divergent perspectives on ChatGPT were evident within and across groups, each group demonstrated a coherent internal consensus, and a broader united pattern was also identifiable across all groups. Therefore thematic analysis is used as a systematic approach to identifying and interpreting recurring patterns of meaning within the qualitative data (Braun and Clarke, 2008). The method supports the identification of shared themes across and within focus groups while allowing for variation in informants perspectives. The six phases outlined by Braun and Clarke therefore structure the analytical process. Within the six phases the analysis will use Gioia's methodology, the three-stage coding process, beginning with first-order concepts derived from informants' own expressions. These will be interpreted into second-order themes, which together form broader aggregated dimensions (Emma Bell, 2019). To support this process, the qualitative data was analysed using NVivo, which supports the systematic coding and comparison of interviews across the focus groups. NVivo helps to manage large volumes of qualitative data, trace relationships between codes and refine themes throughout the analytical process.

5.2 Thematic analysis

The analysis follows "Qualitative Research in Psychology" by Virginia Braun & Victoria Clarke (Braun and Clarke, 2008).

5.2.1 Familiarisation with data

Familiarisation with the data represents the initial analytical phase, providing the researchers with an opportunity to immerse themselves in the interview material. Through repeated reading and listening to the

dataset, the researchers developed an in-depth understanding of informants accounts and patterns in how ChatGPT was discussed (Braun and Clarke, 2008, pp. 87–88).

This phase was not limited to gaining surface familiarity with the data but functioned as an interpretive process in which preliminary analytical reflections began to emerge. During familiarisation, transcription, notes and memos were produced to capture early analytical ideas and questions regarding informants constructions of ChatGPT, including recurring framings such as “sparring partner” and that informant 4 had withdrawn from the use of ChatGPT because of environmental awareness (Attachment 1 - 03:52-04:19). Furthermore notes on all four interviews were made, such as “expressions of scepticism with the use of ChatGPT in certain instances”, given that many of the informants highlighted that they use it a lot, but have in mind that it can be unreliable. In this phase, the researchers need to consider their impact on data collection and analysis as well. Potential bias is also important to consider, as researchers might have formed an understanding of ChatGPT and that researchers, have formed their truth of ChatGPT, and therefore sensitized to notice accounts in the dataset where informants reported skepticism and it being unreliable.

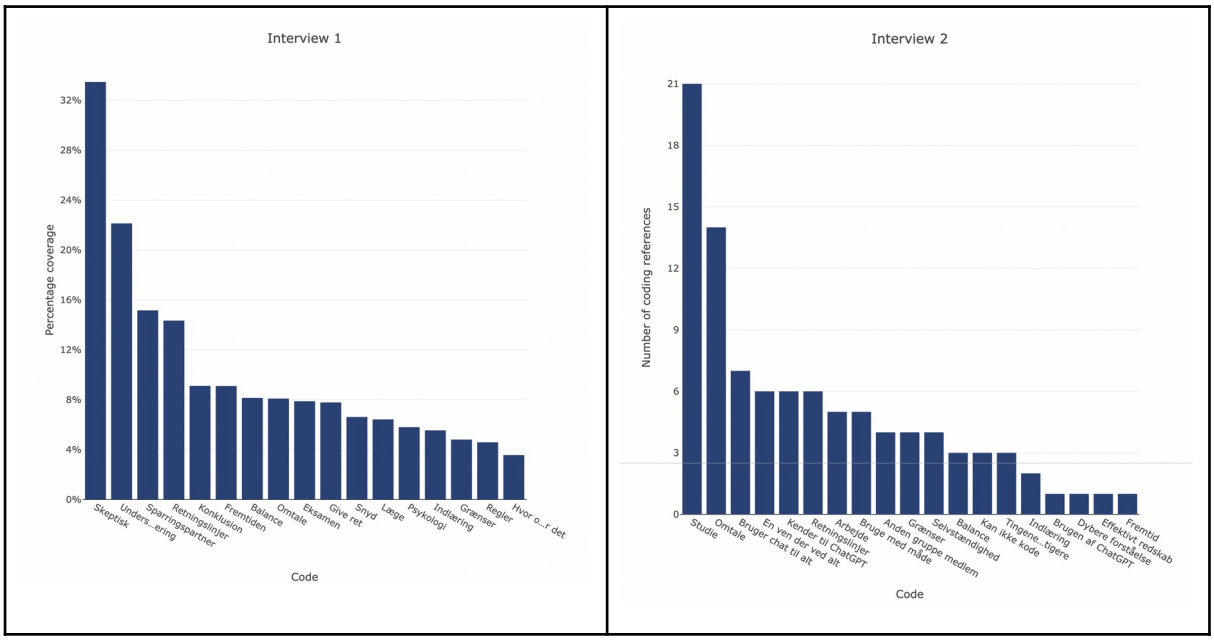
5.2.2 Generating initial codes

The coding process began with open coding of the interview material. In this phase, the data were examined line by line, and codes were assigned using the informants own words and expressions as closely as possible. This resulted in a large number of first-order concepts, such as Study, Sparring partner, Cheating, Guidelines, Effective tool, Skeptical and so on. These concepts remain close to the empirical data and reflect how participants themselves describe their experiences with ChatGPT (Braun and Clarke, 2008, pp. 88–89).

The first-order concepts reveal that informants describe ChatGPT primarily the same, based on situational and experiential terms. Many codes relate to the ChatGPT in the study life, for example Usage, Study, Exam Preparation and Time Saving, which indicates that ChatGPT plays a significant role in academic contexts. Informants frequently describe using ChatGPT as support for understanding material, preparing for exams, or compensating for missing competencies. Further, the participants also described ChatGPT as an interactive tool rather than a passive source of information, through the codes “Sparring partner”, “Extra Group Member”, and “A Friend Who Knows Everything” as shown in figure 3.

On the other hand, the participants also show some concern about the use of ChatGPT through the first-order codes Cheating, Skeptical, Source Criticism, Misinformation, Boundaries, Rules, and Guidelines. This highlights concerns related to ethics, trustworthiness, and appropriate use, where the codes indicate that participants are aware of potential risks and limitations associated with ChatGPT.

Figure 3 illustrates the first-order concepts across the four interviews, highlighting which concepts are most prominent. The figure provides a visual basis for comparing coding patterns across interviews and supports the subsequent abstraction into higher-level themes.



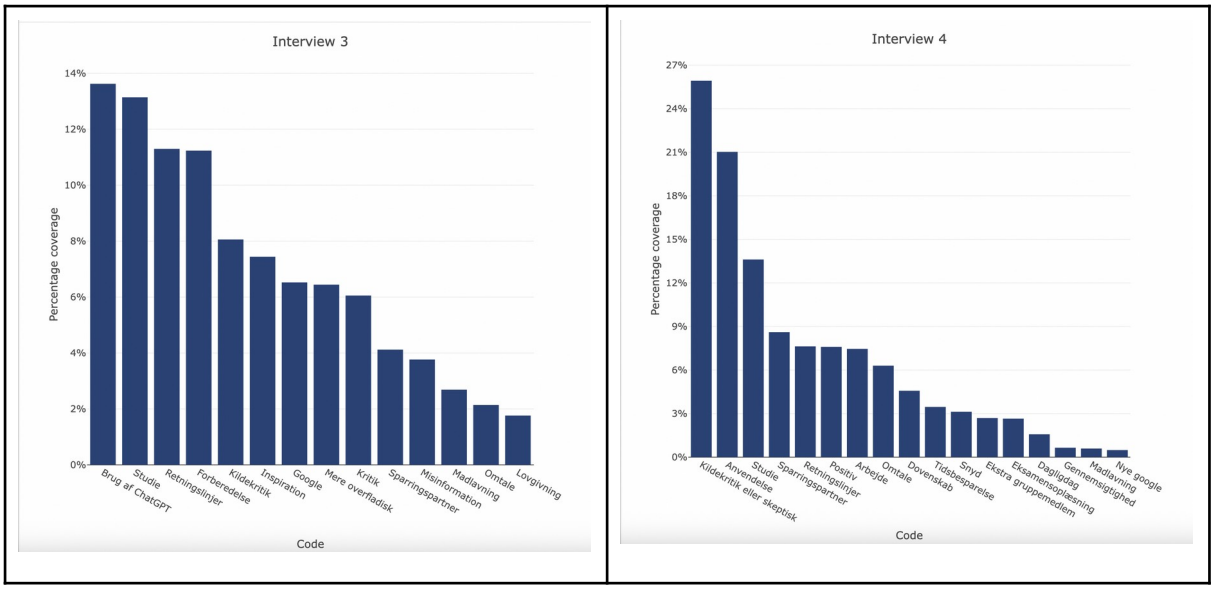


Figure 3: First order concepts
Source: Own production

5.2.3 Searching for themes

First-order concepts were compared and grouped based on shared meaning. Through this iterative process, the analysis moved from descriptive coding to more interpretive, resulting in the development of second-order themes. These themes represent the researchers conceptual understanding of patterns in the data while still being grounded in informants statements. In the final step, the second-order themes were further synthesized into aggregated dimensions, representing the highest level in the analysis. This step involved integrating conceptually related second-order themes in order to capture the overarching themes that structure informants' experiences with ChatGPT (Braun and Clarke, 2008, pp. 89–91).

Through comparison and abstraction, the first-order concepts were grouped into a set of second-order themes that recur across the four interviews. One of the major themes in all of the interviews are “Education and Learning”, related to studying, exams, learning processes, and skill limitations. This theme reflects how ChatGPT is positioned as a learning aid and academic support tool. Further, a common theme is the use of ChatGPT, both in the study life but also in

the private life. Nearly all informants show signs of them using ChatGPT multiple times a week, which highlights the frequency and context of ChatGPT. In the study life a common theme is ChatGPT as a “Sparring Partner” or “Supervisor” which shows ChatGPT as a collaborator, helper, or additional group member (Attachment 1 - 15:22-15:31, Attachment 4 - 41:48-41:55). This indicates that informants experience ChatGPT as supporting reflection, idea development, and problem-solving.
Another big theme is "Ethics, Rules and Boundaries”, which shows concerns about cheating, guidelines, balance, and acceptable use. This theme reflects responsibility and legitimacy in the study.

5.2.4 Reviewing themes

In this phase of the analysis, the second-order themes were reviewed to examine their internal coherence and their relevance across the entire dataset. This involved an iterative movement between individual coded extracts, the second-order themes, and the overall analytical framework to ensure that the themes meaningfully represented recurring patterns in informants discussions of ChatGPT (Braun and Clarke, 2008, pp. 91–92).
The review showed that several themes clustered around how ChatGPT is used as a practical and cognitive resource in both academic and everyday contexts. Themes related to studying, learning support, productivity, and everyday problem-solving were closely connected and often overlapped. Together, they illustrate how ChatGPT is constructed by informants as an integrated support tool rather than a standalone technology. Descriptions of ChatGPT as a “Sparring partner” (Attachment 1 - 52:06 - 54:16) “Extra Group member” (Attachment 4 - 40:41) or “the new Google” (Attachment 3 - 22:46-22:58) further underline its role in supporting reflection, idea development, and understanding across different areas of students’ lives (Attachment 4 - 00:45-01:16). At the same time, another group of themes centered on ethical considerations, trust, and legitimacy. Themes such as cheating, rules, scepticism, misinformation, and source criticism reflect ongoing negotiations about appropriate and responsible use. Informants'

accounts often balanced the perceived benefits of ChatGPT with concerns about academic integrity, dependency, and reliability, indicating that its use is continuously shaped by institutional guidelines and broader social discourses. Based on this review, the second-order themes were synthesized into two overarching aggregated dimensions: “ChatGPT as an integrated support tool in everyday and academic life” and “Negotiating ethics, boundaries, and trust in the use of ChatGPT.”

5.2.5 Defining and naming themes

In this phase, the two aggregated dimensions were refined and clearly defined to ensure that each theme captured a coherent aspect of how informants construct and understand ChatGPT. This process involved specifying the scope of each theme, clarifying how the included second-order themes relate to one another, and ensuring that the theme names accurately reflected their underlying meaning rather than simply describing surface-level content (Braun and Clarke, 2008, pp. 92–93).

The first aggregated dimension, “ChatGPT as an integrated support tool in everyday and academic life,” captures how informants construct ChatGPT as a useful resource embedded in both study-related and private contexts, as shown in figure 4. This theme includes second-order themes related to education and learning, work and productivity, everyday life, and ChatGPT’s role as a sparring partner or guide. Together, these themes illustrate how ChatGPT is not treated as a separate technology, but rather as an extension of existing practices for learning, problem-solving, and information seeking. The chosen name emphasizes integration to reflect how ChatGPT is embedded into students’ routines and meaning-making across different domains of life.

The second aggregated dimension, “Negotiating ethics, boundaries, and trust in the use of ChatGPT,” captures the interpretive work through which informants define what is acceptable, responsible, and legitimate use, as shown in figure 4. This theme includes second-order themes related to ethics, rules and boundaries, scepticism, source criticism, and

misinformation. Rather than expressing fixed attitudes, informants reveal ongoing negotiations shaped by institutional guidelines, peer norms, and broader societal discourses on ChatGPT. The theme name highlights negotiation to reflect that ethical considerations and trust are not settled issues, but are continuously constructed and renegotiated in practice through the use of language.

First-order concepts (informant-centric)	**Second-order themes (researcher-centric)**	**Aggregated dimensions**
Studie, Dybere forståelse, Effektivt redskab, Kan ikke kode, Undersøgelse, Omformulering og idegenerering, Eksamen Prompte, Omtale, Fremtiden, Konklusion, Hvor ofte man bruger det, Mere overfladisk, Forberedelse, Anvendelse, Eksamensoplæsning, Dovenskab, Tidsbesparelse	Uddannelse og studie, Uddannelse og læring	**ChatGPT as an integrated support tool in everyday and academic life**
Tingene til at ske hurtigere, Arbejde	Arbejde og produktivitet	⬆
Aftensmad, Psykologi, Familie, Læge, Følelser, Brug af ChatGPT, Madlavning, Dagligdag	Hverdags- og privatliv	⬆
En ven der ved alt, Anden gruppe medlem,	ChatGPT som vejleder, ChatGPT som sparringspartner	⬆

Sparringspartner, Indlæring, Ekstra gruppemedlem, Nye google		
Selvstændighed, Indlæring, Brugen af ChatGPT, Bruger chat til alt, Positiv, Gennemsigtighed, Omtale	Anvendelsen af ChatGPT, Holdning til ChatGPT	⬆
Grænser, Bruge med måde, Retningslinjer, Snyd, Balance, Regler, Lovgivning, Kildekritik eller skeptisk	Etik, regler og grænser, Regler, ansvar og rammer	**Negotiating ethics, boundaries, and trust in the use of ChatGPT**
Skeptisk, Give ret, Grænser, Gode svar / retfærdiggøre, Kritik, Kildekritik, Misinformation	Skepsis over for ChatGPT	⬆
Omtale, Kender til ChatGPT, Google, Sparringspartner, Inspiration	Italesættelse af ChatGPT, Informationssøgning og alternativ til Google	⬆

Figure 4: Thematic map
Source: Own production

5.2.6 Producing the report

The final phase of the thematic analysis involves developing a coherent and well-supported interpretation of the identified themes. At this stage, the analysis was refined to ensure that the themes were clearly articulated, consistent, and meaningfully aligned with the research question and theoretical framework (Braun and Clarke, 2008, p. 93).

Across all focus groups, ChatGPT was repeatedly described using relational and everyday metaphors, such as “the new Google” (Attachment 3 - 00:52), “a friend that knows everything” (Attachment 2 - 02:27-02:38) or “the 6th group member” (Attachment 4 - 41:40-41:55). For example, participants explained how they use ChatGPT for academic tasks, such as exam preparation and understanding complex theories, and everyday activities like cooking. These recurring descriptions were used in the report to illustrate how ChatGPT is constructed as an integrated support tool that links academic and private life.

At the same time, the report focuses on the tensions present in informants’ understanding of the use of ChatGPT. While ChatGPT is seen as efficient and time-saving, informants also emphasize the need for skepticism and boundaries. Examples include informants describing ChatGPT as “great at sounding convincing… only to apologize for being wrong,” (Attachment 3 - 06:22-06:32) or noting that it is often misinformed “i come up with something completely wrong… only for it to say that it is correct” (Attachment 3 - 06:22-06:32). Such extracts were used to demonstrate how trust in ChatGPT is not unconditional, but negotiated through source criticism, personal judgment and the following of institutional guidelines.

In line with a social constructionist perspective, the report emphasizes how these meanings are produced intersubjectively within the focus group setting. Students frequently build on each other’s statements, laugh together about shared experiences and co-construct common narratives, such as the idea that “if you don’t use it, you’re cheating yourself" (Attachment 4 - 09:57-10:37). These dynamics are treated as analytically significant, showing how shared understandings of ChatGPT emerge through language.

Overall, the report integrates empirical findings with methodological and theoretical considerations, ensuring that the analysis remains

transparent and coherent. This final stage prepares for the discussion, where the results are explained and related to existing research, with a focus on how students talk about and understand ChatGPT in their everyday and academic lives.

6. Discussion

This discussion interprets the findings through a social constructionist perspective and relates them to existing research on ChatGPT. Rather than viewing informants' statements as fixed attitudes, the discussion focuses on how meanings surrounding ChatGPT are produced and negotiated through language.

Informants consistently constructed ChatGPT as an integrated support tool, describing it with metaphors such as "the new Google" or "a sparring partner" (Attachment 4 - 18:41-18:43, Attachment 1 - 01:14-01:26). This aligns with existing research, as presented in the literature review, showing high levels of student adoption and positive evaluations of ChatGPT's usefulness for learning and productivity. However, while previous studies often highlight usefulness and trust as individual and/or measurable, the analysis illustrates how such evaluations are socially constructed. Through shared language, students externalize ChatGPT into habits, which contributes to the institutionalization of its use. At the same time, the findings complicate existing research that treats trust in ChatGPT as relatively stable. Although students reported frequent use, they also expressed scepticism regarding misinformation, dependency, and integrity (Attachment 4 - 06:22-07:44). Similar concerns are however also reported in the literature, particularly in studies focusing on ethical risks and reliability. In contrast to the literature which frames these concerns as barriers, this study shows that ethical issues are negotiated rather than barriers. Students do not reject ChatGPT, but instead constantly define acceptable boundaries depending on context, task, and expectations (Attachment 1 - 52:41-54:41). The focus group discussions reveal how shared understandings of "responsible use" emerge through interaction rather than being determined by institutional rules. While survey-based studies offer insight into individual ethical positions, the

focus group discussions demonstrate how shared understandings of “responsible use” emerge through language.

Overall, the findings suggest that informants’ engagement with ChatGPT is best understood as a social practice, where adoption, trust, and ethics are continuously constructed through language. This study adds to existing research by shifting attention from what students think about ChatGPT to how understandings are formed and maintained.

7. Conclusion

Based on four focus group interviews, the students revealed that there is a common perception, where the students consistently construct ChatGPT as the 2 aggregations dimensions explored. The first aggregated dimension demonstrates that the students acknowledge ChatGPT as a “sparring partner”, and as “an extra group member”. The second aggregated dimension demonstrates that student's engagement with ChatGPT is characterized by negotiations of ethics, boundaries, and trust but also some level of scepticism regarding dependency and misinformation. Rather than rejecting ChatGPT based on scepticism and concerns, the students continuously negotiate what is acceptable and responsible based on the context ChatGPT is used for. This indicates that ethical considerations are not fixed rules but are instead socially constructed and renegotiated among the students. The findings also reveal that the students’ perceptions on ChatGPT have developed towards more acceptance, as the professors integration and acceptance has increased in the recent years.

Overall, this study contributes to existing research by emphasizing how students talk about and make sense of ChatGPT, rather than solely focusing on what they individually think about ChatGPT. The findings in this study suggests that students’ engagement with ChatGPT is

understood through a social practice shaped by broader social discourses within the university. As ChatGPT continues to evolve with new improvements, and become more embedded in academic contexts, understanding these socially constructed meanings is crucial for universities seeking to develop guidelines, responsible use, and support students' learning practices.

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9. Appendix

Attachment 1: Transcription of first interview

Attachment 2: Transcription of second interview

Attachment 3: Transcription of third interview

Attachment 4: Transcription of fourth interview

Attachment 5: Log book